

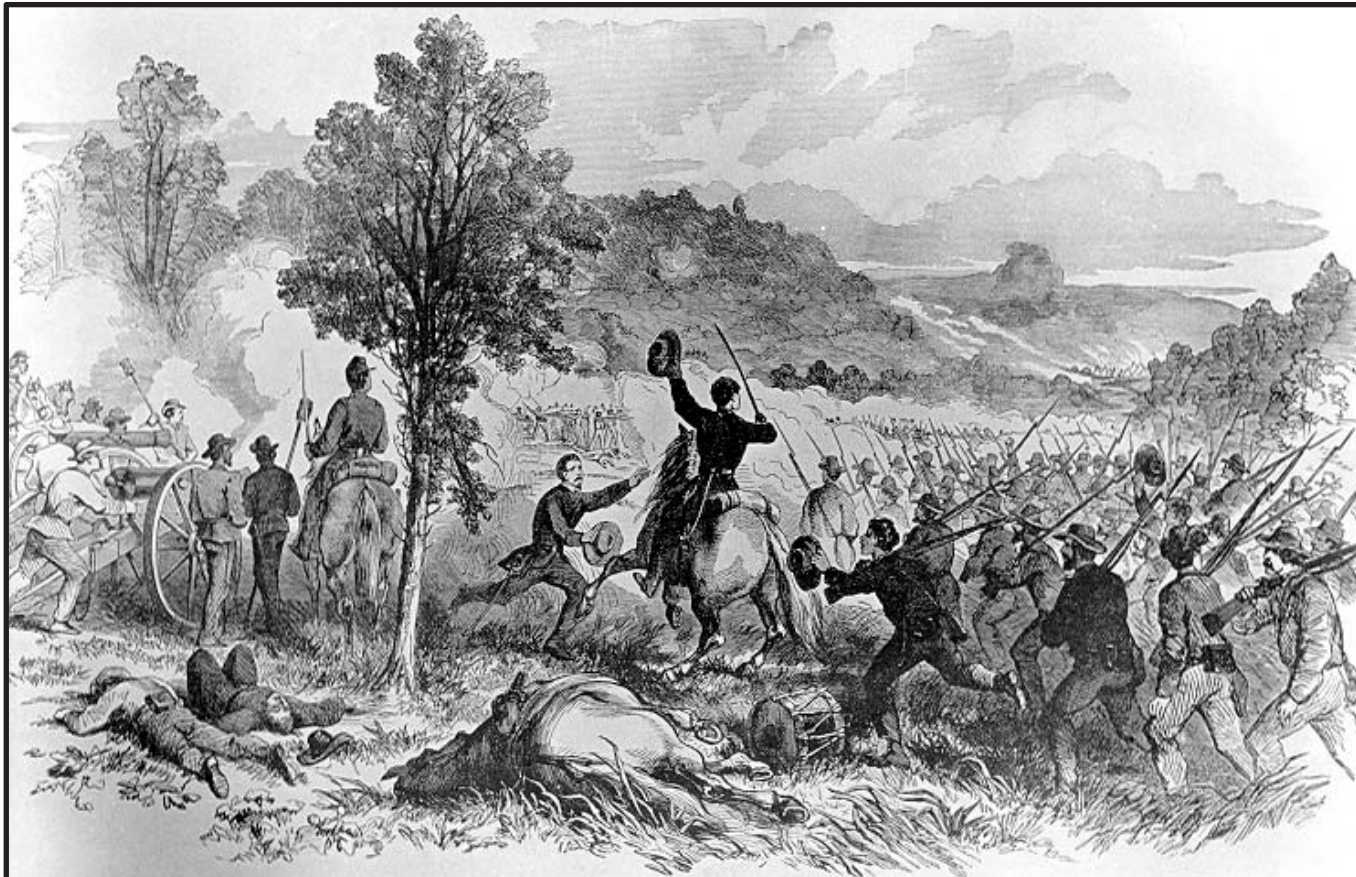
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield
Missouri



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Draft General Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement



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April 2002

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield • Missouri

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield is about 10 miles south of the city of Springfield, Missouri, on the boundary between Greene and Christian Counties in the southwestern corner of the state. The park encompasses 1,750 acres, which includes 75% of the actual battlefield. The park was established on April 22, 1960, in order to preserve and commemorate the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the site of the second battle of the Civil War and the first major battle west of the Mississippi River. The park contains 50 archeological sites, many of which are associated with the battle, as well as a number of historic structures, cultural landscapes, and artifacts related to the battle. At the time of the battle, the valley of Wilson's Creek was a thriving agricultural area with several farms and the homes of numerous families. Only a few remnants of this agricultural community remain.

The purpose of this *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* is to outline the specific resource conditions and visitor experiences desirable for the park and to propose alternate management strategies for achieving these goals. The *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* will provide a framework to guide park management decision-making for the next 15 to 20 years. The plan presents three management alternatives for resource protection and visitor experience of the park. Two action alternatives are compared with the no-action alternative (alternative A), or continuation of existing conditions.

- **Alternative B – Wilson's Creek Battlefield Commemoration (Preferred Alternative).** Under this alternative, park management would focus on efforts to commemorate the Battle of Wilson's Creek and emphasize a reflective and contemplative visitor experience. Recreational use would be allowed but would be managed so as not to conflict with the core mission of the park or the primary visitor experience.
- **Alternative C – Wilson's Creek Civil War Research Center.** Under this alternative, park management would focus on Wilson Creek's distinctive combination of site integrity and artifact and archival collections in developing the park as an outstanding research center.

Scoping and public participation have been integral to this planning process. You may send comments on this document to the following address:

Superintendent Richard A. Lusardi
Wilson's Creek National Battlefield
6424 West Farm Road 182
Republic, MO 65738

For further information about this document, please contact Gary Sullivan, Chief of Resource Management Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, at 417.732.2662 x286.

SUMMARY

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield preserves a place of great significance to the history of the Civil War, the site of the war's second major battle and the first fought west of the Mississippi River. The park's 1,750 acres encompass 75 percent of the ground where, on August 10, 1861, 5,400 Union troops under General Nathaniel Lyon clashed in a brutal fight with 12,000 Confederate and Missouri State Guard soldiers under Generals Benjamin McCulloch and Sterling Price.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The general management plan is the primary planning document for the National Park Service. The management planning process describes specific desirable resource conditions and visitor experiences for the park, assesses alternate management strategies for achieving these goals, and provides a framework to guide park management decision-making for the next 15 to 20 years.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield has operated under the 1977 *Master Plan*. Since completion of the plan, the park and surrounding region have changed significantly. The visitor center and the tour-road loop both were constructed in the wake of the *Master Plan*. The population of the Springfield metropolitan area grew from 207,704 to 240,593 between 1980 and 1990, and increased to 281,767 by 1995. The population of Greene County increased from 152,928 to 218,095 between 1970 and 1995; that of Christian County grew from 15,124 to 38,433 in the same period. Regional population growth increases the potential for additional visitors and impacts on the park's cultural and natural resources. These and

other issues requiring management action, such as reconciling recreational use with the park's core mission, the impacts of encroaching suburban development, battlefield rehabilitation, resource management, and the need for regional cooperative planning, have been identified in consultation with park staff, local agencies, and the general public.

Both park staff and the general public expressed their desires for the park's future condition, which largely dovetail with the issues stated above. The identified future conditions include increased rehabilitation of the battlefield landscape, coordinated strategies for cultural and natural resource management, developing partnerships with neighboring landowners, coordinating park and regional planning, identifying recreational alternatives to Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, and ensuring that all visitors understand the significance of the national battlefield.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WILSON'S CREEK NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

During the first work sessions for the management plan, park planners refined the purpose and significance statements for the park. Based on a review of the park's enabling legislation and the professional expertise of park staff, National Park Service historians, and other subject matter experts, the park purpose and three significant topics were identified:

Purpose

- The purpose of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield is to commemorate the Battle of Wilson's

Creek and to preserve the associated battlefield.

Significance

- Wilson's Creek National Battlefield is significant as the site of the second battle of the Civil War and the first major battle west of the Mississippi River.
- Wilson's Creek National Battlefield is the site of the death of General Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general killed in the Civil War. Lyon's death focused national attention on the potential loss of Missouri to the Confederacy.
- Wilson's Creek's rural character evokes the setting experienced by the combatants.

ALTERNATIVES

The management alternatives describe overall management concepts and the alternate ways in which the management prescriptions would be applied to the park.

Management Prescriptions

The management prescriptions, or management areas, identify how different areas in the park would be managed to achieve a combination of desired resource conditions and visitor experiences. The following are the management areas designed for Wilson's Creek National Battlefield:

- Visitor Services and Administration
- Interpretive Focus
- Battlefield Landscape Enhancement
- Resource Preservation
- Landscape Maintenance

These management areas would be applied to the entire park, but the locations and size

of each management area would depend on the overall emphasis of each alternative. Table 1, Management Prescriptions and Identified Management Alternatives, provides an overview of the management areas and the three alternatives identified to manage park resources and visitor experiences.

FORMULATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The management alternatives, including the preferred alternative, were developed with NPS staff based on the issues or concerns, desired future conditions, and visitor experiences articulated by the general public, NPS staff, subject matter specialists, park users, and neighboring landowners. The alternatives describe overall management concepts and the alternative ways in which the management prescriptions would be applied to the park.

ALTERNATIVE A — NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Management under this alternative would follow the 1977 *Master Plan* to manage and protect the park's cultural and natural resources. The current levels and types of recreational uses, including horseback riding, bicycling, running, and walking, would be allowed. The interpretive program would continue to offer both self-guided tours and park ranger-led programs that explain the Battle of Wilson's Creek and the Civil War in Missouri. Rehabilitation of the battlefield landscape would continue on a limited scale, as staffing and funding permit. Park maintenance would continue to undertake measures to control the spread of exotic and noxious plants and protect the threatened and endangered species found within the park boundaries.

Interpretive programs, including guided tours and demonstrations, would continue to

focus on tour groups, school groups, and visitors who make Wilson's Creek National Battlefield a destination stop. Improvements would be made to the interpretive program to enhance information provided to the visitors. Visitor services and interpretive programs would not be expanded to address recreational users. The park boundaries would not be adjusted under the no-action alternative.

ALTERNATIVE B — WILSON'S CREEK BATTLEFIELD COMMEMORATION (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE E)

Management under this alternative would focus on efforts to honor the memory of the Battle of Wilson's Creek through an array of interpretive and educational experiences that inform visitors of the special nature of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. The park interpretive programs would emphasize a reflective and contemplative visitor experience that captures the site's unique qualities and its status as hallowed ground dedicated to sacrifice for principles and the human and social costs of the Civil War. Park management would work with local schools, museums, and universities, as well as officials and agencies from the cities of Springfield, Battlefield, and Republic, and Greene and Christian Counties, in communicating to the public the meaning and significance of the park's history and resources.

Interpretation would be a major focus in the park. New interpretive displays would be designed to enhance the visitor's experience. Park ranger-led programs would occur along interpretive trails or at interpretive sites. Other experiences would be self-directed. Visitors using new park maps and brochures would follow the tour-road loop to important sites where interpretive signs would provide information about the events that occurred at those locations. Marked trails would guide

and inform visitors about the important resources at each site. New and existing trails in the park would be developed or realigned along the routes of historical trails and traces whenever possible in order to strengthen all visitors' connection to the historical scene. Planning for the interpretive program would emphasize aesthetically compatible media that are discrete and unobtrusive.

Preserving and retaining the historic character of the cultural landscape would be a priority; 718 acres, or 41 percent of the park, would be located in the Battlefield Landscape Enhancement zone, where visitors could envision the events of August 10, 1861. Data compiled in the draft cultural landscape report would enhance park management's effort to preserve the landscape's historic character. Recreational use would be allowed, but managed so as not to detract from the park mission, visitor experience, and efforts toward landscape rehabilitation. Horseback riding would be allowed only on designated trails as long as this use did not impact the experience for other visitors. Passive recreational activities such as hiking would be allowed in the interpretive focus area. Equestrian use would be allowed along the Wire Road, which is located in the interpretive focus area. Additional services, such as interpretive information and park ranger-led tours, would not be developed for recreational users.

Visitor access would be allowed in areas with sensitive resources such as archeological sites or threatened and endangered species habitat, either with guided tours or self-guided interpretive trails.

Park management would monitor levels of recreational use for potential impacts on resources or the visitor experience. When conflicts occurred, park management would limit recreational use wherever and to whatever degree necessary to ensure the visitors' ability to contemplate and appreciate of the park's history and significance.

Park management would cooperate with agencies and officials from the cities of Springfield, Battlefield, and Republic, and Greene and Christian Counties in their long-range regional planning efforts. These planning efforts would focus on both regional and park issues, seeking solutions to the impacts of increased suburban growth, transportation development, and visual intrusions along the park's boundaries. The landscape maintenance zone would include much of the park's perimeter within the boundary. Vegetation management in this area would help mitigate impacts resulting from visual and auditory intrusions.

Park staff would work to resolve conflicts that arose over management activities, visitor access, and proposed activities and developments on adjacent lands that could affect Wilson's Creek.

NPS managers would seek understanding and cooperation with landowners to encourage management of their lands in a manner compatible with park purposes. NPS staff would also seek ways to provide landowners with technical and management assistance to address issues of mutual interest. The NPS would work closely with local, state, and federal agencies whose programs affect or are affected by activities at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

ALTERNATIVE C — WILSON'S CREEK CIVIL WAR RESEARCH CENTER

Alternative C would focus on a distinctive combination of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield's outstanding site integrity and vast archival collection to develop the park as a major research center focusing on the Civil War in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and other areas west of the Mississippi River.

Historical and scientific research in support of resource preservation, rehabilitation, and interpretation of the park's history and significance would be the management focus for this alternative. Historical, archeological, genealogical, and biological research in park archives and at significant resource sites would be encouraged. These research activities would have the potential of providing additional information on the park's history and significance and thus enhancing the visitor experience. The park would work with universities and state agencies in developing strategies for managing its collection, outlining archival research guidelines, and establishing protocols for archeological investigations. These research programs would enhance interpretive efforts to inform and educate park visitors and develop educational outreach programs for the local communities. Internet technology would be used to facilitate research, interpretation, and outreach programs.

Park staff trained in archival management would assist professional and non-professional researchers in the research library and with park collections. School groups, tour groups, and other park visitors would be encouraged to visit significant cultural and natural resource areas and research sites whenever appropriate. These sites would be interpreted to explain methods of data recovery and how these

efforts ultimately would contribute to a better understanding of the battlefield.

Less than 10 percent of the park, 139 acres, would be included in the Battlefield Landscape Enhancement area. This is the smallest amount for this area under the three alternatives. Only selected primary sites of the battlefield landscape would be designated for treatments that would retain and preserve the battlefield's historic character. This reduced emphasis on landscape enhancement would enable park staff to focus efforts on interpretive and educational programs and on assisting researchers. Archeological, historical, and biological research potentially could provide additional data and guidance for future landscape enhancement. As research efforts provided more information about the battlefield landscape, park management may wish to consider negotiating cooperative agreements with neighboring landowners to maintain the integrity of the surrounding landscape that were critical to the battle.

Recreational uses, including horseback riding, bicycling, running, and walking, would be allowed and managed so as not to impede visitors who wished to focus on the history and significance of Wilson's Creek. Research involving highly significant resources, such as archeological sites or threatened and endangered species would occur in the resource preservation area. Recreational use in this area would be limited to hiking and walking.

A total of 726 acres, or 41 percent of the park, would be zoned for landscape maintenance. Park management would monitor levels of recreational use or research activities for potential impacts on resources or on visitors' ability to contemplate the significance and meaning of the battle. Where conflicts occur, park

management would limit recreational use to ensure the visitors' ability to contemplate and appreciate the park's significance.

Park management would cooperate with agencies and officials from the cities of Springfield, Battlefield, and Republic, and Greene and Christian Counties in their long-range regional planning efforts. These planning efforts would focus both on regional and park issues, seeking solutions to the impacts of increased suburban growth, transportation development, and visual intrusions on the park's boundaries. The landscape maintenance zone would include much of the park exterior. Vegetation management in this area would help mitigate impacts resulting from visual and auditory intrusions.

Park staff would work to resolve conflicts that arose over their activities, visitor access, and proposed activities and developments on adjacent lands that could affect the battlefield. NPS managers would seek understanding and cooperation with landowners to encourage management of their lands in a manner compatible with park purposes. NPS staff would also seek ways to provide landowners with technical and management assistance to address issues of mutual interest. The NPS would work closely with local, state, and federal agencies whose programs affect or are affected by activities at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

Boundary Assessment

The Arizona Desert Act (PL 101-628 § 1216) directs the secretary of the interior to develop criteria to evaluate any proposed changes to the existing boundaries of individual park units. Those criteria are to include

- analysis of whether the existing boundary provides for the adequate protection

and preservation of the natural, historic, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources integral to the unit

- an evaluation of each parcel proposed for addition or deletion based on this analysis
- an assessment of the impact of potential boundary adjustments taking into consideration the factors listed above as well as the effect of the adjustments on the local communities and surrounding areas

Boundary adjustments may be recommended to

- protect significant resources and values, or to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes
- address operational and management issues, such as the need for access or the need for boundaries to correspond to logical boundary delineations such as topographic or other natural features or roads
- otherwise protect park resources that are critical to fulfilling park purposes

As part of the general management planning process, the NPS has identified and evaluated boundary adjustments that may be necessary or desirable to carry out the purposes of the park.

All recommendations for boundary changes must meet the following two criteria:

- 1) The added lands will be feasible to administer, considering their size, configuration, ownership, the presence of hazardous substances or exotic species, costs, impacts on local communities, etc.
- 2) Other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

The NPS must identify and use, to the maximum extent possible, alternatives to the direct federal purchase of privately owned lands. The NPS can acquire only the minimum necessary to achieve management objectives, and it can cooperate with landowners, other federal agencies, tribal, state, and local governments, and the private sector to manage land for public use or protect it for resource conservation.

The authorized boundary of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield encompasses 1,750 acres, approximately 75 percent of the actual combat areas associated with the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Some lands significant to the battle lie outside the park boundary. For a full description of these lands and the ways in which they would be applied under the alternatives, please see the "Adequacy of Park Boundaries" and the "Boundary Adjustments and Land Protection" sections in chapter 1.

Environmental Consequences

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires environmental documents to disclose the environmental impacts of all reasonable alternatives and any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the preferred alternative be implemented. Table 4, Summary of Impacts, summarizes the impacts of the alternatives, including the no-action alternative, on cultural resources; visitor experience and aesthetic resources; natural resources; social and economic environment; and park access and transportation. Please see chapter 4, "Environmental Consequences," for a detailed analysis of the impacts of the management alternatives.

TABLE 1. MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS AND IDENTIFIED MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A – No Action Continuation of Existing Conditions	Alternatives/Management Prescriptions	Alternative B – Battlefield Commemoration	Alternative C – Civil War Research Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Management areas will not be applied in continuation of existing conditions. The current management actions are described below:Tour-road loop open for biking, running, and walkingRecreational uses: hiking, walking, picnicking, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding. Allowed to maximum extent possible.Primary equestrian staging on tour-road loopContinue use of overflow equestrian parkingConstruct addition to visitor center for research library and artifactsPark ranger-led interpretive walks and programs at Ray House and Bloody HillTrails open for hiking, running, and walkingNo new trailsWire Road open for pedestrian and equestrian useNo expansion of designated equestrian trailsContinue rehabilitation of battlefield landscape as funds and staffing permitMissouri bladderpod glades habitat restoredControl visitor access to sensitive sites	VISITOR SERVICES / ADMINISTRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary visitor contact pointsEquestrian parking moved to site near visitor centerConstruct addition to visitor center for library and artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary visitor contact pointsConvert overflow equestrian parking to permanent siteConstruct addition to visitor center for research library and artifacts
	INTERPRETIVE FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tour-Road Loop: managed to maintain park mission and visitor experience. May result in limiting types and levels of useEliminate equestrian staging on tour-road loopNew trails—follow historic tracesWire Road open for pedestrian and equestrian useAdd park ranger-led interpretive walks and special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New trails—follow historic tracesWire Road open for pedestrian and equestrian useTrails open for hiking, running, and walkingAdd park ranger-led interpretive walks and special eventsTour road open for auto touring and bikingEliminate equestrian staging on tour-road loop
	BATTLEFIELD LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Retain and enhance the general appearance of the battlefield landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rehabilitation priority establishedHistoric character of Sharp farmstead and fields retained and enhancedEnhancement of Bloody Hill and other significant areas of the battlefield will be deferred pending the results of more extensive research
	RESOURCE PRESERVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited visitor access and recreation activities (hiking) accommodated within context of park purpose. Where conflicts occur, decisions favor resource protectionMissouri bladderpod glades habitat restoredSensitive cultural resource sites protected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited recreation activities (hiking) permitted if compatible with research activities. Controlled visitor access to sensitive sitesResearch efforts encouraged in park archives and libraryResearch protocol developed in cooperation with local academic communityArcheological and natural resource research efforts will be interpreted as part of the visitor experienceMissouri bladderpod glades habitat restored
	LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Manage invasive speciesScreen visual and auditory intrusionsLimited potential for expansion of designated equestrian trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Landscape maintenance area available for equestrian usePotential expansion of designated equestrian trails